



To Build A Ship Model



At our next meeting, the Hampton Roads Ship Model Society, will commence a rerun of the course of lectures and presentations that were given by various of our members for several years loosely grouped under the title TO BUILD A SHIP MODEL. The first presentation in this new series is titled, Types and Characteristics of Wood That Are Useful In Ship Model Building. The presentation will be given by Joe McCleary. As a special attraction Joe has indicated that he will bring not only samples of commonly used woods but also a sample of the very rare species of wood, "invisible pine" (*invisibilea virginiana*). This is the wood most favored by Bill Clarke for building his ship models.

Joe McCleary

Editors Note: During the formatting of the July issue of the Logbook, Joe's by-line at the end of the "To Build a Ship Model" column was inadvertently obscured. OOPS!

Mystery Photo



Welcome to Mystery Photo, *Logbook* No. 181! Just when you think that Clarke has covered all the available ship types used by the US Navy during the Spanish American War and World War One, he produces another one. I think this month's image might complete the list. What a way to finish!?? Bill says there is extra credit for anyone who can identify the photo's location and name the vessel in the background and describe its function. Bill only awards credit. If it prizes you want, you'll have to wait for the next "Guest Photo" column. Is anyone up for Bill's challenge?

By the later half of the 19th century, the profits from American industry had produced a new wealthy class. Free from the confines of Government regulation and with virtually no income tax to pay, these individuals amassed vast fortunes. Eager to demonstrate their wealth and power, many of these "Gilded Age" men built lavish mansions at the best in-town addresses and grand seaside estates. Eschewing conventional modes of transportation, they traveled the world and commuted between their residences by boat. This was much more stylish and exclusive than traveling by train and allowed for the "grand entrance." Their vessels were not

really boats, but small ships called yachts. Yachts were another way for these individuals to display their wealth and establish their position in society, and these vessels allowed their owners to participate in the sport of kings—yachting.

War has always been tough on the owners of private vessels but good to their pocketbooks. Likewise, war has been deliverance to vessels nearing the end of their useful lives—the so-called "tired" hulls. While a peacetime navy struggles to get and hold the budget needed to maintain what vessels they have, a wartime navy struggles to quickly augment its fleet. Historically, the peacetime US Navy is maintained below the strength needed to fight the next war. If you check the facts, you'll see that in every major war in U.S. history the Government has conscripted every available vessel for one duty or another. Last month we documented the resurrection of the near-derelect auxiliary cruiser *Topeka* for just that reason. Does this month's Mystery Photo tell the same story? Has some unlucky owner just had his prize yacht requisitioned by the US Navy for war service?

Read on.

Our Mystery Photo does indeed show a splendid example of the luxury yacht, not overly large, but one beautifully balanced in design. Was anyone able to identify her? Besides yours truly, Joe McCleary is the only person to play this month. I guess it's not surprising we didn't agree. I'll give Joe's response first, and begging his pardon, it's printed in its entirety.

Joe writes: "This one turned out to be a very interesting challenge and I benefited from some good luck. Like your previous accomplishment, I solved the basic problem in about 15 minutes, but then spent about an hour trying to prove to myself that I was correct. To cut to the chase, the mystery photo is of the gunboat, USS *Sylvia* (a most unlikely name). She was built as a steam yacht by the firm of A Stephen & Sons of Glasgow in 1882. She was purchased by the U.S. Navy on 13 June 1898 to supplement fleet strength during the Spanish American War. This ship, like the previous *Topeka*, was converted to warship status at New York Navy Yard and commissioned on 29 June 1898. She spent the short period of the war in the area of Key West and Norfolk. She was decommissioned in December of that year and transferred to the Naval Militia (an early version of the Naval Reserve) of Maryland. In December, 1907 she was transferred to the Pennsylvania Naval Militia, where she served until September 1913 when she was transferred to the District of Columbia. In April of 1917, with the start of WWI she was recommissioned and assigned to the Fifth Naval District as a patrol vessel. She was finally struck from the naval list in 1919 and sold in 1921.

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Sylvia had a displacement of 302 tons, a length of 130 feet and a beam of 18' 6", with a draft of 10 feet. She was capable of making a speed of 9 knots. She had an armament of one 3 pounder gun and three 1 pounder guns plus two machine guns.

I should have been smart enough to think that Bill Clarke might be pulling these photos off a stack in order of the date of ship accession. So *Sylvia* would naturally follow *Topeka*, but that would also require the assumption that Clarke, a completely random object, would have some organization to his system (tough to believe). I made the assumption that this vessel was a yacht purchased for patrol duties during WWI, so I started by checking the 1917 Janes, and there she is. Had I assumed that she was a Spanish American War acquisition, I would have drilled a dry hole, because *Sylvia*, for some strange reason, does not appear in Janes until 1914. The Janes photo is taken in the exact same locale with the roofed over sailing ship and the same buildings in the background. The Janes' photo shows the port side of the ship and she appears to have a darker color scheme, though this may be the result of poor photo quality. I could find no further photos of this ship in The Mariners' Museum collection, in DANFS or on the Naval History Center's web page.

The mystery photo must have been taken between 1898 (purchase of the ship) and 1914 (first dated appearance of a photo). I tried to figure out the identity of [the] ship in the background. It could not be *Constellation*, because that ship had an elliptical stern and this ship has a definite square stern. It could be *Constitution*. She has a square stern and at one time also had a roof. But *Constitution* spent the end of the 19th century in Portsmouth, NH. In 1897 she was towed to Boston and in 1907 her roof was removed and the process of restoring her to her War of 1812 appearance was begun. So rule out *Constitution*; she and *Sylvia* were never in the same port when the former ship had a roof. I never liked this idea anyway because the roofed ship in the mystery photo is a bit too bulky and slab sided to be *Constitution*, though the roof might throw perspective and proportion off a bit. It also appears that this ship has three rows of guns, which would make her a ship of the line.

Most wooden ships, other than *Constellation*, *Constitution* and *Hartford* had been eliminated by 1900, but there were still two old ships of the line in existence. *Vermont* was a station ship in Boston and *New Hampshire* was assigned to the Naval Militia at New York. *Vermont* was broken up in 1902. *New Hampshire* laid down at Portsmouth NSY in 1818 as a 74-gun ship of the line under the name *Alabama*, but lack of funds had delayed her construction and she was not launched until 1864 with the name *New Hampshire*. At launching she was configured as a store ship and spent all her career in that role or as a receiving ship after the Civil War, mostly in New England ports. In 1893 she was decommissioned and assigned to the New York State Naval Militia. She was informally renamed *Granite State* in 1907, so her old name could be used for a new battleship. She accidentally caught fire and sank in 1921. Her hulk was

Temporary Library Closing Schedule

Due to renovation, the Mariners' Museum Research Library & Archives will be closed to the public from August 1st through September 30th. Library and Archives staff will continue to provide reference and research services, but responses may take up to fourteen weeks during this period.

raised and sold for salvage. She was being towed to the Bay of Fundy the next year, when the towline parted in a storm and she sank for the final time in Massachusetts Bay.

So my solution is this: The mystery photo is of *Sylvia* and it was taken in June 1898 at New York NSY when she came in for conversion to a gunboat. At this point she does not appear to be a commissioned vessel as no there is no evidence of a jack or an ensign or a commissioning pennant. The Jane's photo was taken a few weeks later, near the end of her conversion, after she had been commissioned and she had a darker color scheme for war service. The Navy gave Jane's the second photo because that showed the ship in commissioned status and naval configuration even though it is not as good a photo. The ship in the background is *New Hampshire/Alabama/Granite State*. That's my story and I am sticking to it. Now all I have to do is figure out what ship was procured next in order after *Topeka* and *Sylvia* and I may have the August mystery photo solved already (assuming Clarke keeps dealing off the top of the deck, but it is hard to believe that Clarke has any method to his madness)."

Joe, I wish you hadn't been so emphatic on the identity of the yacht and the vessel in the background. You'll see why in my closing comments.

Here's my solution: The mystery photo this month reveals one of the numerous private yachts that was taken into US Naval service during the Spanish American War. Unlike Joe's method, this month I tried to find all my data on the Internet. I was not totally successful and had to supplement my research with a visit to my library. Armed with her general appearance as a guide, I began my search at the Naval Historical Center's (NHC) web site. I searched their photographic file for yacht photos and quickly reduced the field of likely candidates, some with photos on file and others without them. A quick trip through my printed references eliminated most of the others until I was left with two likely candidates—*Hist* and *Oneida*. The "hard" points from the vessel's design that I needed to match from our mystery photo were the shape and appearance of the forward-placed deckhouse, the single stack and its location immediately aft the deckhouse, and the fore mast coming through the top of the deckhouse. The twin masts were somewhat ubiquitous, as was the bowsprit. The curved, sharply raked stem and the long stern overhang were also fairly common. And, of course, the paint scheme was fairly typical for yachts of her day.

I made *Oneida* my choice, primarily because of the strong physical resemblance between our mystery photo and the NHC image (Neg. NH 43066). Next, I concentrated my

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effort in finding data about her. I had some trouble finding *Oneida* listed on the on-line *Dictionary of American Fighting Ships* (DANFS), so I reverted to a printed reference of her in Paul Silvertson's book *U.S. Warships of World War I*. There, she is listed as becoming the merchant vessel *Henry P. Williams* in 1914, and also listed as the naval ship *SP-509* in 1917. Armed with this data, I reentered the on-line *DANFS* and found her listed under her new name—*SP-509*. The listing reads: "*Henry P. Williams* (SP-509) was a converted yacht which served as a minesweeping training craft and patrol boat 1917-18. Built as yacht *Illawarra* by Bath Iron Works, Bath, Maine, in 1896, she was originally taken into the Navy in 1898 as *Oneida*."

This was good data indeed, enough to press on and nail the identification. Searching further, I found an unofficial history of the Bath Iron Works under a link on the Haze Grey and Underway web site. The site contains a wealth of good information on Bath-built ships as well as production records from Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company and New York Shipbuilding Corporation. (If you go to these sites, plan to spend some time there, they are big.) According to the records from Bath, hull number 14, *Illawarra*, was built for Mr. Eugene Tompkins of Boston, Massachusetts. The vessel was 110'-9" long, 18'-6" beam, 10'-11" depth, 7'-6" draft, and a displacement of 160.91 tons. She was powered by a triple expansion steam engine rated at 400 horsepower. Launched on March 18, 1896, she was delivered to her owner on June 3, 1896. The steamer carried a 2-masted schooner rig (gaff-rigged).

Further details of *Oneida*'s career are interesting and help to explain her name change and why it was difficult to find her service record. Since the data at the Bath site was the most complete, I'll paraphrase it here: Eugene Tompkins sold *Illawarra* to the United States Navy in 1898 for the princely sum of \$60,000. There she was converted to an armed yacht, was renamed *Oneida*, and served in Spanish-American War. Inactive from 1898 to 1912, she was then recommissioned as a training ship and given to the District of Columbia Naval Militia. In 1914 she went to Port Royal, South Carolina for use as a Navy Disciplinary Barracks. Sold out of service in 1915, she was renamed *Henry P. Williams* and used as a pilot boat at Charleston, South Carolina. Reacquired by the US Navy in 1917, she was renamed *SP-509* and used for patrol and minesweeping training. She was returned to her owner in December 1918. (You have to wonder whether he was happy to get her back after all those years.)

Since I was satisfied with my identification of the mystery vessel, I turned my attention earning that extra credit. The task of finding the location where the photograph was made and identifying the background vessel was made very easy when I spotted another image on the Naval Historical Centers' web site, (Neg. NR& L (O) 2196). That photograph was taken at the same place. The image shows the yacht *USS Siren*, a 315-ton yacht, built in 1897 at Leith, Scotland. Operating as the civilian *Eugenia*, the Navy purchased her in June 1898. Renamed *Siren*, the yacht served on the Cuban

blockade during the Spanish-American War. After that conflict, she was a naval militia training ship and a tender at the Norfolk Navy Yard. She was struck from the Navy List in August 1910. The photo caption reads: "At the New York Navy Yard, Brooklyn, New York, 8 July 1898. Another converted yacht is astern of her, and the receiving ship *USS Vermont* is in the left distance." That clinches the location and the identity of the background vessel. (My son was struck by the fact that the photograph was exactly 109 years older than he is. Perhaps that will be the spark for his appreciation of history.)

Ultimately, we were only able to estimate the date of the photograph. I feel, as Joe does, that the image was made on the day that the yacht, in my case *Illawarra*, was turned over to the US Navy for war service—sometime during the summer of 1898. Again, *Siren*'s photograph was taken on July 8, 1898. The timing couldn't be better.

I can't end this column with Joe and I choosing different vessels, can I? Just as I am confident about my choice, I was bothered by Joe's choice of *Sylvia*. The name was too familiar to me, although when his response arrived I couldn't figure out exactly why. Then I remembered why. Several years ago, during one of his trips to visit the clan, Clarke returned with a very unusual set of ship plans for me. These plans were of a steam yacht built by Alexander Stephen & Sons of Linthouse, Glasgow in 1882. Anyone want to guess what yacht these plans are for? Once I saw her arrangement and saw that she didn't hit any of the "hard" points I mentioned earlier, I knew Joe was wrong in his identification. So, am I right this month?

As in sports there is no whistle when the outcome of a play is in doubt. This time, I can't blow the whistle and end the play. I feel like the football official in the Doritos commercial when he says, "Upon review, we need further review!" I didn't make a positive identification, only one where the facts fit the best. I even went back through all the source material looking for something, anything, to change my mind. Honestly, I couldn't find anything conclusive, but there is another yacht, mentioned earlier, that could be a contender--*Hist*. A photo of *Hist* that appears on page 170 of Paul Silverstone's book, *U.S. Warships of World War I*, is strikingly similar. She is wearing her civilian paint scheme. Sure does look like our Mystery Photo...

John Cheevers

MINUTES



Minutes HRSMS Monthly Meeting

Date: July 13 2001

Host: Alan Frazer

Guests: None

The meeting was called to order by the Skipper at 2000 hours.

A purser's report was given.

Old Business: Len Wine gave information on the new HRSMS shirts. He quoted the price as \$12.50 for shirts with a pocket. There was discussion of the colors, sizes and other options available. Len said he would put an article in the August Logbook and further discussion was tabled.

Chuck Reynolds sent the rest of the HRSMS material in his possession to Len Wine. Len now has all the archives from the former Historian.

New Business: The "To Build a Ship Model" series of talks is about to resume. The membership was asked to contact Graham Horne with subject they would like to have covered in the series. (At the time of publication, response has been lacking.)

To facilitate attendance by those on the south-side of Hampton Roads, a tongue-in-cheek motion was made to hold all further meetings and the home of Harvey Williams. A vote on this motion was postponed and may be revived at the August meeting.

A letter requesting ship models for display at the NRG Conference from John Wyld was read. Several members expressed an interest in responding.

Ed Saunders said that he could give a presentation on his model of the river steamboat Arabia. He has a series of pictures on it's construction that he would convert to slides. His offer was well received and the presentation will be scheduled.

John Cheevers read an e-mail he receive from Steve Jorgenson, looking for models of the Monitor and Merrimack. Several names of possible sources were given to John.

Show and Tell: Alan Frazer showed several tugboats in various scales and the planking progress on his current project. Joe McCleary showed a woodworking catalog. Graham Horne displayed a set of "ubiquitous" clamps he purchased at Walmart. Brad Granum showed three books on merchant ships, one of which was by our own Frank Mastini.

I recieved an unsolicited e-mail with a link to a boating website. It may be of interest.

T. Saunders

THE BOATING CHANNEL NEWSWIRE

The Weekly e-Letter For Boaters

www.BoatingChannel.com

July 30, 2001

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- Boat Basin Featured Boat - Aprea Mare 12 Meter Cabin Cruiser
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- Book Review - THE GOLDEN CENTURY: Classic Motor Yachts; 1830-1930
- Boating Channel July Specials

From: *Dictionary of American Fighting Ships*

John M. Howard

John Martin Howard was born 20 August 1917 in Chester, Pa., and enlisted in the Naval Reserve 22 June 1935. After training duty 1940-41 at the Naval Reserve Midshipman's School, Howard was appointed Ensign 28 February 1941. After serving at Washington Navy Yard and at the Bureau of Ordnance, Howard was assigned temporary duty at the American Embassy, London. He was killed 11 June 1942 as a result of an accidental mine explosion.

(IX - 75: dp. 94; l. 87'; b. 20'; s. 9 k.)

John M. Howard (IX-75) was built in Camden, N.J., in 1934 as *Elsie Fenimore*, and purchased from her owner, E. R. Fenimore Johnson, 2 July 1942. She was placed in service at Philadelphia 29 July. Taken to Washington, D.C., and renamed John M. Howard 17 August 1942, she commissioned there 1 September 1942.

During the war the ship was used for ordnance experiments, operating out of Naval Ordnance Laboratory, Washington, D.C., to Chesapeake Bay and various Atlantic coast ports. She decommissioned 9 May 1945 at the Washington Navy Yard and was placed in service until 16 November 1945. She was returned to the Maritime Commission for disposal 24 January 1946.

Transcribed by Yves HUBERT
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MYSTERY PHOTO

Contact John Cheevers by mail, e-mail or
telephone if you know what it is.
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NOTABLE EVENTS

AUGUST

- 10 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting: Ford's Colony Group
Joe McCleary, Wood for Model Building

SEPTEMBER

- 14 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting: Host, John Cheevers

OCTOBER

- 4-7 **NRG Conference**, Rockville Maryland
12 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting: Host, Graham Horne

NOVEMBER

- 9 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting: Host, Heinz Schiller

DECEMBER

- 14 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting:

JANUARY

- 11 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting: Host, Bob Comet

FEBRUARY

- 8 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting:

MARCH

- 8 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting: Host, Southside Bunch

APRIL

- 12 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting:

MAY

- 10 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting:

JUNE

- 7 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting:

JULY

- 13 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting:

Next Meeting

Date: August 10, 2001

Time: 2000 Hours

Place: 302 St. Andrews Drive, Williamsburg, Va.

Host: Ford's Colony Group

The next meeting will be hosted by the Ford's Colony Group on August 10, 2001 2000 hours. The meeting will be held at the Ford's Colony Swim and Tennis Club, 302 St. Andrews Dr., Williamsburg Va.

Take I-64 to exit 234. Take Rte.199 south 1.5 miles to Rte, 60. Make left turn (west) to first light (Rte.614, Centerville Rd.). Turn left, go 3 miles to Rte. 612 (Longhill Rd.). Go .7 miles to Fords Colony. Check in at the brick gate-house on the left. Go .9 miles (on John Pott) to Edinburgh. Make right turn. Go .5 miles to St. Andrews. Make left turn and go .9 miles to the Swim and Tennis Club building.



Thanks

The members would like to thank Alan Frazer and his wife, Jane for hosting the July meeting.

WATCH, QUARTER AND STATION BILL



Skipper:	Bob Comet	(757) 934-1279
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	Tom Saunders	(757)-850-0580

Brewer's Phrase & Fable

Port, meaning larboard or left side, is an abbreviation of *porta il timone* (carry the helm). Porting arms is carrying them on the left hand.

Starboard and Larboard Star- is the Anglo-Saxon *steor*, rudder, *bord*, side; meaning the right side of a ship (looking forwards). Larboard is now obsolete, and "port" is used instead. *To port the helm* is to put the helm to the larboard. Byron, in his shipwreck (*Don Juan*), says of the ship-

<http://www.bibliomania.com>